

CITY OF NEWTON

IN CITY COUNCIL

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023

Voting Members Present: Captain Doucette, (Police), Councilor Downs, Mitchell Fischman (resident), David Koses (DPW) and Isaac Prizant (DPW)

Also Present: Councilors Leary and Malakie; Jeremy Freudberg, Alternate Resident Traffic Council Member

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxprwB2HdIM>

Mr. Koses provided a PowerPoint presentation, attached.

TC5-23 ISAAC PRIZANT, CITY TRAFFIC ENGINEER, requesting a stop sign on the traffic island at the northwest corner of the Clark Street and Rowena Road intersection (Clark Street southbound). (Ward 6) [02/10/23 @ 9:15 AM]

ACTION: APPROVED 5-0. Approved the language of TPR 867. This item may be appealed through the close of business April 12, 2023.

NOTE: Mr. Koses stated that two residents requested this stop sign request through our WebQA/311 system. The request is to add a stop sign to clarify the right of way. City staff believe that there is a slight safety benefit installing a stop sign, even though the driver is supposed to stop when arriving at this intersection. Zero crashes have been reported at this intersection. Stop signs are permitted but not required.

Public Comment:

A resident stated that he supports adding a stop sign at this large intersection. Vehicles are traveling in all directions. There are many children, pedestrians, and strollers. Walking across this intersection is difficult and there is no crosswalk or sidewalk. This resident suggested adding stop signs, sidewalks and crosswalks at each corner of the intersection. Mr. Prizant answered that unfortunately, we're prohibited from adding crosswalks where there aren't accessible ramps under ADA laws.

A resident stated that the intersection needs improvement. There is some confusion for drivers traveling from Centre Street around the corner at high rates of speed. Visibility is limited at the corner. He asked whether it is possible to line paint the road to make that wide section of the road narrower. He also stated that a stop sign would cause brake noise, and perhaps a yield sign would be best. Mr. Koses noted that Traffic Council does not have an independent budget to vote for large-scale intersection reconstruction, but can approve low-cost items, such as a stop sign.

A resident asked whether it would be feasible to install a stop sign in front of #21 Clark Street. Mr. Koses responded that this was not docketed for this evening's discussion, but in the future this suggestion could be docketed for Traffic Council's consideration. For this meeting, the stop sign was requested was for Clark Street, southbound. DPW reviewed the request and thought that would be a safety improvement. The most important aspect is to define who has the right of way, and who needs to stop at the intersection. If a stop sign is installed, it becomes clear who has the right of way, and who needs to stop. Mr. Prizant added that DPW believes this stop sign is an incremental step towards a safer intersection. The east-west directional portion of Clark Street is the clear thruway. He added that the positioning of a stop sign and stop bar would be a little bit odd due to the location of the existing speed bump. However, Mr. Prizant noted that staff do not feel very strongly about adding a stop sign, that there is not a history of crashes. However, staff do prefer to add stop signs in cases like this, where the stop is implied, and where the geometry is unusual.

Councilor Downs stated that she agrees with the public comment. This is a really large intersection with a lot of pavement. When the City reconstructs it, we may want to look at adding sidewalks and narrowing down the road width. She stated that she supports adding the stop sign, but that we should definitely revisit the location to determine what is necessary on the other leg of Clark Street.

Mr. Freudberg stated that he lives on Clark Street and wants his neighborhood to be safe but does not think that the case has really been made for a stop sign. This is a very unique intersection and cannot be analyzed as two independent "T" intersections. He stated that he met with Mr. Prizant in the field, and he said that Mr. Prizant agrees. If a stop sign is what is desired here, then he stated that he would make the case that we actually need to consider the guidance for either two-way or multi-way stops in the manual, and that traffic data is necessary. Mr. Freudberg continued by stating that "stop signs should be installed in a manner that minimizes the number of vehicles having to stop intersections where a full stop is not necessary at all times. Consideration should be given to using less restrictive measures, such as yield signs." In the past, when Traffic Council comes across these intersections with unique geometry, we say the geometry needs more work, and we don't put in a stop sign. In this case, when you exit Clark Street, southbound, you have clear sightlines. He continued by stating that in his opinion, the stop sign violates the manual and City Ordinance. He recommends holding this item for further study.

Mr. Prizant stated that this is an atypical intersection.

Two-way stop signs guidance mostly applies to an intersection that's more of a typical four-way intersection. It would be challenging to go through those warrants. The majority of drivers approach this intersection from Clark Street, intending to come to some point of slowing down, observing and judging. He doesn't think that motorists are viewing this area as a clear thruway for them, like the drivers on the east-west portion of Clark Street. He stated that yield signs are a great tool for channelized movements, but if we add a yield sign at this intersection, it will add to confusion. Ultimately, you'd have one intersection that has two free flowing approaches, one stop-controlled approach and one yield-controlled approach would make it more confusing. He stated that he thinks that a stop sign is safer and more consistent.

Mr. Freudberg stated that he does not see this as two intersections. There is a large area of pavement where four roads meet. That's not two intersections. We should work on the real solution. This intersection actually operates smoothly. He continued by stating that he knows that this intersection can be scary for pedestrians, but he thinks that it would be just as scary for pedestrians after a stop sign is installed, which would create a false sense of security.

Mr. Prizant stated that more data is necessary. The stop sign is not a very strong recommendation from DPW. The couple of complaints came in around the same time Feeney Brothers Utility Services were working at this location. There are drivers who slow down, and most drivers realize that they don't have the clear right away. If they stop, they are not doing the wrong thing. Mr. Koses added that a stop sign will make the area safer and, once again, will clarify the right of way.

A resident asked who to contact to have a more significant improvement to the intersection. Mr. Prizant answered when it comes to a larger effort, we do have a few different avenues. This intersection was added to our ongoing list of potential projects for unsignalized intersections. We are an old City with unfortunately a lot of unique intersections making that list long. We have tried to look at it from a data-driven approach. There is competition for funding, and the City has engaged with a consultant to do a very large sidewalk inventory. He does not know where this intersection is on that list.

Mr. Fischman stated that drivers get used to stop signs and this is the first step to making the intersection safer until there is a new docket item.

Mr. Koses briefly described the appeals process.

Without further discussion, Council Downs made the motion to approve this stop sign. Council members agreed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

David Koses, Transportation Coordinator
Traffic Council Chair